(c) and (d) The Department of Women and Child Development earmarked a lump sum provision of Rs. 146 crores during 2000-2001 for releasing to the North Eastern States and Sikkim. During the course of the year 2000-2001, Rs. 116.08 crores were re-appropriated to the relevant heads/schemes, from this lump sum provision of Rs. 146 crores and released to the North Eastern States and Sikkim under the relevant heads/schemes. The main reason for the shortfall was the lack of receipt of complete and viable proposals.

Melting of Glaciers

†*470. SHRI RAMACHANDRA KHUNTIA: Will the Minister of SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Government are aware that about fifteen thousand small and big glaciers in the Himalayan region are melting so fast, due to which the country could face severe water crisis in the next ten years;

(b) if so, what strategy Government have decided to adopt in this regard; and

(c) what steps Government are taking to stop melting of glaciers, so that flow of water therefrom in Ganga, Yamuna and Brahmputra rivers continue to be available?

THE MINISTER OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY (DR. MURLI MANOHAR JOSHI): (a) to (c) Yes, the Government are aware of the fact that the Glaciers in the Himalayan region are shrinking gradually. As per the inventory of Himalayan Glaciers prepared by Geological Survey of India, there are over 7500 glaciers (big and small) in the Indian part of the Himalaya. The recession of glaciers is a natural process sensitive to climatic fluctuation wherein the rise in global average temperature (called global warming) results in melting of the glaciers in extents varying with their locations as well as seasons.

The studies carried out in Himalayan Region have indicated that these Glaciers are passing through a phase of recession. The rate of recession in different climatic zones of the Himalaya is found to be different in different years. Studies indicate that during the coming ten years, the rate of recession is not likely to reach an extent which could cause water scarcity. The measures taken to reduce the effect of human interference on glaciers include conservation activities such as afforestation, removal of garbage and promotion of sustainable eco-tourism.

†Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.